# THE BRITISH IN AFRICA.

## A BRILLIANT BOOK BY A BRILLIANT ADMINISTRATOR.

BRITISH CENTRAL AFRICA. An Attempt to Give Some Account of a Portion of the Territories Under British Influence North of the Zambezi. By Sir Harry H. Johnston, K. C. B. With Six Maps and 220 Illustrations Reproduced from the Author's Drawings and from Photographs. Octavo, pp. xix, 541. Edward Arnold.

Books about Africa succeed one another with the rapidity of summer novels, but not often do they yield as much refreshment to the reader as one of those ephemeræ. As a rule, they are superficial or too technical, too sportsmanlike or too dull. From all these defects and from every other that the fastidious critic might devise Sir Harry Johnston's new volume is captivatingly free. It might be said that he had not had a particularly engaging theme. British Central Africa is not one of the most fascinating regions in the world. It does not matter. Sir Harry Johnston employs a pen that could turn far less promising material into something very like literature. He is that rarest of types in modern letters, a practical man who has the narrator's gift at his finger tips. Furthermore, he is extraordinarily versatile; he is so richly equipped an author, in fact, that it would be unfair to discuss the substance of this volume without first touching upon the peculiar qualifications he possessed for bringing it within our reach.

SIR HARRY JOHNSTON.

The author of this work was appointed Her Majesty's Commissioner and Consul-General to British Central Africa in 1890. Prior to that time he had spent some years in the service of his Government in Africa; he had been largely instrumental in bringing the district he now describes under the British protectorate, and he had, indeed, suggested the name which it now bears. It stands to-day largely as his handiwork, and it so stands because he is a perfect example of the kind of man England finds, somehow, to extend her Empire, even in the darkest regions. In his subjugation, as it may well be called, of British Central Africa, he has exercised high military skill and even higher administrative capacities. That much we might have learned from the newspaper reports. In the printed record of his work he shows those other qualifications which have been revealed by his preceding writings on kindred topics, but which are here revealed at full length. He knows thoroughly the physical geography of his State, and has the power to describe it in warm, vivid prose. He knows the history of British Central Africa to the core. He has insight into the character of the natives and a deep familiarity with their customs, their religion, their mental and moral status. Read his chapters on the botany and zoology of the country, and you would take them for the production of specialists who had never given a thought to anything but their specimens. He is not content with giving his reader the fullest information about the slave trade, the languages of the country, the missionaries and the European settlers. He includes a series of letters from an imaginary correspondent calculated to give the intending colonist a perfect idea of the outfit he needs, the work he will have to do and the manner of life he will lead; he throws in some enchanting pages on the general appearance of British Central Africa, and, on top of all this, he fills his book with superb illustrations, mostly drawn or photographed by himself. When he tells us how he designed the arms of the State and its postage stamps, and, on page 332, drops into musical notation in order to convey the call of the African cuckoo, there is nothing to do but to throw up one's hands and admit that here is an Admirable Crichton indeed. Yet the book has not an ounce of pretence in it. It is just the vigorously written work of a man who takes his gifts as he takes his duties, quite as matters of course. There is no priggishness here, nor is there any of the British insularity which is so frequently encountered in English books on African subjects. Like Lord Cromer in Egypt, Sir Harry Johnston in Africa is a model, and his book is like him.

Sir Harry Johnston sets one question at rest in which the world at large has almost as much interest as in the actual nature of the domain he administers, the question, namely, of Portuguese rights in the land. For some occult reason there have been in the press and elsewhere many bitter things said about the action of the Government at Lisbon at the time England established her protectorate. The Serpa Pinta expedition claimed to be purely scientific, and before Sir Harry Johnston knew if the Portuguese were aiming to take control of the Shire province. The Portuguese Governor at Mozambique appointed Lieutenant Coutinho "Governor of the Shire" before the home Government of either nation had a chance to interfere. The British press jumped to the conclusion that Portugal had acted in bad faith. But Sir Harry Johnston when sentenced to be hanged. "What is the good?" he asked, when an opportunity was offered to him to defend himself. "These people are resolved that I shall die. My hour is come." But in this fatalistic attitude lies the secret of much of Sir Harry Johnston's success. He had to fight frequently and fight hard, but the natives are now content with the protectorate. They have accepted it not sullenly, perhaps, as Mlozi accepted his sentence, but with the same quiet conviction that there is nothing more to be said. And certainly they have been the gainers by British administration. We use that last epithet rather than "colonization," for, to tell the truth, England has won few emigrants to the Shire Highlands. The land is beautiful and fruitful, the climate is a mixture of excessive heat and cold, but it is not unbearable, and the success of the few planters and traders already in the country seems to point to a smooth road for more Europeans. Yet malaria continues to be more or less rampant, and while Sir Harry Johnston presents a flattering table of development for the short period of the protectorate, he protests that the whole difficulty lay with Portugal's representatives in Africa, not with the Foreign Office at Lisbon, and the upshot of the controversy proves that he is right. Portugal willingly fell in with the plans of England, and the British Commissioner had no difficulty in founding the protectorate so far as its neighbor on the east was concerned. But it had some severe tussles with the native chiefs, and our author gives a spirited picture of that alternation of elementary diplomacy with elementary warfare which is familiar in Anglo-African history. He had valuable assistance, and the occasions are numerous upon which he testifies to the sterling services of his colleagues, but it is plain that his own tact and skill are the chief pillars of the present structure. On the other hand, not one of his own exploits is comparable for adventurous picturesqueness to that of Sergeant-Major Bandawe, of the Atonga, in the capture of Mlozi, a chieftain who had given the administration much trouble, and whose stockade had at last been attacked. Sir Harry Johnston tells the tale, delightedly, as follows: "After the Sikhs and officers had given up searching Mlozi's house, Bandawe had remained behind, feeling certain that there was some secret hiding place. After an interval, during which he remained perfectly quiet, he fancied he heard voices speaking under ground. In the corner of the main room was a bedstead, and under the bedstead was an opening leading to an underground chamber. Crawling under the bed, Bandawe heard Mlozi asking, 'Who is there?' Mimicking the voice of a Swahili, he replied, 'It is I, master,' and descended to the underground chamber, where he found Mlozi being guarded by a man with a spear. Bandawe had no weapon with him, but threw himself upon the man and wrenched his spear from him, which he then ran through his body. Turning to Mlozi, he threatened to kill him at once unless he followed him without resistance. Mlozi, who was stupid with his wound, did so, and he was safely brought into the camp by Bandawe."

The passage reads like a fragment of martial romance, and there is something akin to the speech of novelistic savages in Mlozi's words when sentenced to be hanged. "What is the good?" he asked, when an opportunity was offered to him to defend himself. "These people are resolved that I shall die. My hour is come." But in this fatalistic attitude lies the secret of much of Sir Harry Johnston's success. He had to fight frequently and fight hard, but the natives are now content with the protectorate. They have accepted it not sullenly, perhaps, as Mlozi accepted his sentence, but with the same quiet conviction that there is nothing more to be said. And certainly they have been the gainers by British administration. We use that last epithet rather than "colonization," for, to tell the truth, England has won few emigrants to the Shire Highlands. The land is beautiful and fruitful, the climate is a mixture of excessive heat and cold, but it is not unbearable, and the success of the few planters and traders already in the country seems to point to a smooth road for more Europeans. Yet malaria continues to be more or less rampant, and while Sir Harry Johnston presents a flattering table of development for the short period of the protectorate, he is nevertheless cautious in his advice to settlers (it is one more of his virtues as an historian), and concludes, candidly: "I might state with truth that 'but' for malarial fever this country would be an earthly paradise; the 'but,' however, is a very big one." Sir Harry Johnston places his hope upon the discovery of some antidote to the fever. If drugs can be discovered "which will make the treatment of the disease and recovery therefrom almost certain," he surmises that British Central Africa will become the haven of thousands. In the mean time, it looks as if the land would remain indefinitely a valuable fraction of African domain which England will exploit and yet leave, perforce, in the hands of a few Europeans. The blacks seem tolerably certain of being left to their own devices. Of course, there are tales of land-grabbing, and it is easy to understand how some of the "claims" of the European settlers have been established without much profit accruing to the natives immediately concerned. But Sir Harry Johnston depicts an administration rapidly growing in adaptability and beneficence as well as in power.

Roads are spreading, bridges are getting themselves built, and a mail service has been established the native members of which are devoted to their duties. "Cases have been known where postal-carriers have been drowned in the crossing of flooded rivers by their obstinacy in not parting from their mail-bags, and where they have fought bravely and successfully against odds in an attack by highway robbers." The country is fairly well policed and will be in better and better shape as time goes on if the present well-organized force is developed. Justice is administered under circumstances often rather primitive, the collectors who have judicial warrants exercising their powers in districts far from the seat of the Residency at Zomba, but we judge from what Sir Harry Johnston says that there is no mistaking the beneficent spread of law in British Central Africa. Finally he observes that the total amount of trade done with the country in 1891 was £39,965 in value. In 1896 the year's trade was computed at £102,428.

AN ANGONI WARRIOR, BRITISH CENTRAL AFRICA.

JOHNSTON'S PALLAH.
(An antelope named for its discoverer, Sir Harry Johnston.)

# NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES

## BRET HARTE'S PROOF THAT A SEQUEL CAN BE WELL WRITTEN.

THREE PARTNERS; OR, THE BIG STRIKE ON HEAVY TREE HILL. By Bret Harte. 12mo, pp. 342. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

BOUND IN SHALLOWS. By Eva Wilder Brodhead. 12mo, pp. 271. Harper & Bros.

A SON OF THE OLD DOMINION. By Mrs. Burton Harrison. 12mo, pp. 355. Lamson, Wolffe & Co.

THE MERRY MAID OF ARCADY, HIS LORDSHIP and Other Stories. By Mrs. Burton Harrison. 12mo, pp. 348. Lamson, Wolffe & Co.

MISS ARCHER ARCHER. By Clara Louise Burnham. 16mo, pp. 312. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

DEAR FAUSTINA. By Rhoda Broughton. 12mo, pp. 306. D. Appleton & Co.

NULMA, An Anglo-Australian Romance. By Mrs. Campbell-Praed. 12mo, pp. 291. D. Appleton & Co.

THE WAYS OF LIFE. Two Stories. By Mrs. Oliphant. 12mo, pp. 330. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

THE CHEVALIER D'AURIAC. By S. Levett Yeats. 12mo, pp. 322. Longmans, Green & Co.

FOR THE CAUSE. By Stanley J. Weyman. 16mo, pp. 222. Charles H. Sergel Company.

It is an accepted tradition that all sequels are bad. The writing of a good one now and then is only the exception that proves the rule. But this is no reason why we should look askance at the exception when it happens along, and thus we can delight in Bret Harte's new book, though in the most barefaced manner it "takes up the thread of the narrative" where the author left it in "Barker's Luck," a volume of stories published a year or more ago. The present tale is so good that it almost eclipses its predecessor. It is not only longer and more complicated, richer in episodes and dramatic surprises, and therefore more interesting, but it is in Bret Harte's best vein. The Pacific Slope has not lost its charm for him, or its inspiration. He goes back to the old scenes and the old figures without wearying of them, and he does not weary his reader. On the contrary, it is as if the novelist had quietly resolved to show us how firm his grip remained, how little ground for real fear there was in those various recent stories of his which have been below his highest level. "Three Partners" shows us that the old skill is still active, that the old spirit is still vigorous, and we welcome the familiar comrades, the familiar heroine and her foil, the familiar villain and the thrice familiar gambler. They have trod the boards before, but the glamour of the novelist's mimic world is over them yet. Jack Hamlin, the gambler of this latest story, is perhaps the best illustration of Bret Harte's freshness of touch. How many times has he not brought this personage upon the scene with his unerring aim, his spotless linen, his dissipation and his flashes of chivalry? We know him of old, but Jack Hamlin is none the less lovable for all that. The hint of melodrama, too, with which the story is brought to an end we recognize at once; no one but Bret Harte could have brought it in exactly such a way. Yet we like it. The whole book, in fact, takes hold of the imagination and holds it fast. So long as Bret Harte can do that he will be lightly blamed for occasional failures.

There is one masculine type which clever women apparently find it easy to paint. It is the man who is physically attractive, but unstable as water and as bad as the cowardice which accompanies his weakness will let him be. Why this sort of hero should so inspire the feminine imagination is a question it would be interesting to discuss, but not by any critic who dreads controversy. Mrs. Brodhead adds another to the list of dames of the pen who have achieved such a portrait with more or less success. In one particular she fails as most of her predecessors have failed—she does not make her prodigal as fascinating as the scheme of her story demands that he should seem. But such as he is he is very much alive, and serves excellently well to point an obvious moral. The other characters are vividly if slightly drawn, and the story is, on the whole, entertaining, suggestive and true to human nature.

BRET HARTE.

Mrs. Burton Harrison's undoubted powers are at their best in her short sketches of the so-called society of the day—sketches which are tactful, tasteful, graceful, and which have each an appropriate note of humor, of satire, or of pathos. Her historical novel, dealing with Revolutionary